

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers Appoints New President



New CASLT President John Erskine (right) along with former CASLT President Miles Turnbull (left) shown here with the Honourable Pierre Lemieux (center), current Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages. Mr. Lemieux was a speaker at the CASLT AGM.

Ottawa – December 7, 2007. The appointment of John Erskine as new President concluded the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers' (CASLT) Annual General Meeting on November 29th.

John Erskine is the French and Languages Consultant for the Winnipeg School Division where he provides support to administrators, teachers and students of Basic French, French Immersion, Spanish, Hebrew and Ukrainian bilingual programs.

Mr. Erskine's vision as President of CASLT is to get Canadians speaking more languages, and better! "The realization of this dream depends on two groups of people – the first group is the language learners themselves and the second group is everyone who supports, enables, promotes and celebrates their learning – and that includes teachers, researchers, administrators, policy makers, funders, resource creators and CASLT partners", he stated.

Under Mr. Erskine's leadership, CASLT will focus on considering linguistic duality within a context of diversity, and on the promotion of plurilingualism as an added value to Canada. Already, CASLT has taken the lead in developing a cohesive network among teachers of international languages in all provinces and territories. Plans to coordinate a national conference of international languages in the spring of 2009 are also underway.

CASLT looks forward to participating in the consultations on linguistic duality and official languages announced by the federal government. In a context of globalization and growing diversity in the country, these consultations are meant to discuss the main trends that will have an impact on Canadian society and the importance of official languages as well as their place in the Canada of tomorrow. New census data reports that in certain regions of Canada, two out of five people speak a language other than English or French at home. These trends showcase the need for all Canadians to embrace linguistic diversity and for better targeted English as a Second Language and French as a Second Language programs to suit the needs of students who are learning French or English as a third or fourth language.

John Erskine's presidency also coincides with significant structural change to the Association. The Board of Directors and National Council are now two distinct entities, with 19 elected individuals working to govern the Association. The changes will increase, in a significant way, the capacity of the association – capacity to better serve its members and to work to promote language teaching and learning in Canada.

Established in 1970, the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) increases awareness, appreciation and understanding of the importance of second language learning and teaching throughout Canada and promotes the advancement of professional excellence among language educators.

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